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C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000007

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [MR](#)  
SUBJECT: GAZA: MAURITANIANS INDIRECTLY LINK RECALL OF  
AMBASSADOR FROM ISRAEL TO U.S. PRESSURE ON REGIME

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 6

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Israeli Ambassador Michael Arbel confirmed with junta Foreign Minister Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou the Mauritanian authorities have recalled their Ambassador in Israel "for consultations" in response to tremendous domestic and foreign pressure. Ould Mohamedou told the Ambassador that Mauritania "remains committed to the relationship" and assured him that "we don't want to do any more." That said, the "Foreign Minister" explained that several days of student pressure coupled with extreme parliamentary pressure (comment: coming at the same time the junta is trying to get parliament and the "National Dialogue on Democracy" to bless a "roadmap to democracy" that would effectively legitimate the August coup d'etat. end comment). When asked how long the "consultations" would take, Ould Mohamedou said "until the pressure dies down." Mission MFA contacts also confirmed with Mission that the withdrawal of their ambassador was "only for consultations" as a "sign of protest over the situation in Gaza" and that the ambassador would likely return as soon as tensions were reduced.

¶2. (C) Immediately following the discussion of the withdrawal of the Ambassador, Ould Mohamedou launched into a discussion of the difficulties the regime was having "in re-establishing democracy" because of the extreme pressure from the United States. He told the Israeli Ambassador, "we really need Israel to put pressure on the U.S. to stop putting pressure on us," indicating that such assistance from Israel would help the regime to demonstrate that Mauritania gains some tangible benefit from their relationship with Tel Aviv. Arbel stressed that the "Foreign Minister" never directly linked Israeli pressure on the U.S. with continued relations with Israel but the Israeli added, "the implication was pretty obvious."

¶3. (C) Arbel told Charge Israel has "absolutely no intention" to pressure the U.S. over our condemnation of the regime. Arbel is being directed to sit tight and has been given press guidance regretting the Mauritanian decision but voicing confidence in the long-term relationship.

¶4. (C) Comment: Although the regime had repeatedly told the Israeli's that they are Tel Aviv's "best option" in Mauritania, the recall of their ambassador comes as no surprise. The strategic interests for Mauritania in maintaining ties with Israel have little impact with the majority of Mauritaniens who oppose diplomatic ties. The Mauritaniens see their relationship with Israel as being instrumental in winning and maintaining U.S. and other

Western support. Consistent U.S. condemnation of the coup makes them reconsider that assumption. As the regime tries to gain popular and political support for the coup d'etat, the continued relationship with Israel is a tempting bargaining chip that has reportedly led part of the anti-coup FNDD coalition to offer acceptance of the coup for severed ties with Tel Aviv. Finally, as financial resources for the regime dwindle, Libya offers an economic lifeline -- but one predicated on cutting ties. End Comment.

HANKINS